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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. BEEF

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage October 30 on prosecutors' investigation into game-fixing scandal in Taiwan's professional baseball league; on the government's warning regarding the hike in prices in the local housing market; and on the upcoming local elections.

¶2. Editorials and commentaries continued to focus on the controversy over Taiwan's decision to open its market to U.S. bone-in-beef and other beef products. An op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" criticized the Ma Ying-jeou administration's poor decision-making process in the negotiations with the United States, which caused AIT Director William Stanton to make an analogy between the death rates of eating U.S. beef and riding scooters in Taiwan. Another column in the "Apple Daily" questioned the logic behind Stanton's analogy and warned that if the United States pushes the envelope too much, a political storm might be created in Taiwan. An editorial in the KMT-leaning, China focused "Want Daily" said the controversy has given the people of Taiwan new experiences and feelings about the United States. The editorial said that whether the people of Taiwan, one of the pro-U.S. fortresses in the world, would change their views about the United States, depends on the attitude of the United States. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" criticized Stanton's analogy, and urged the United States to regard Taiwan as "an important piece of the puzzle in U.S. foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific." On the other hand, an editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said it is "time for some facts about U.S. beef." The editorial used statistics to suggest that eating U.S. beef poses no substantial health risk. End summary.

¶3. U.S. Beef

A) "Ma Ying-jeou and Su Chi's Perfunctory [Approach]"

Liu Shih-chung, now a Visiting Fellow at the U.S.-based Brookings Institution, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation 520,000] (10/30):

"... Facing the United States, the superpower, Taiwan does not have many bargaining chips during negotiations. Under the current diplomatic policy principle of 'engaging with China on a full basis,' the United States does not give Taiwan incentives immediately just because cross-strait relations have improved. Beijing does not loosen its hands on sensitive U.S.-Taiwan issues. If it is said that during the [former] Chen Shui-bian administration, there were clashes in relations between the United States and Taiwan, which were a strain, the Ma [Ying-jeou] administration's attitude of taking care of everything personally and being obedient when it deals with the United States should have provided it with more bargaining chips during negotiations. How come [the Ma administration] backed off from the bottom line which the DPP administration had upheld by allowing bone-in-beef, offal and ground beef coming into Taiwan; moreover, [the Ma administration] let AIT Director William Stanton get a significant achievement [on one of his tasks] not long after Stanton assumed office, which made Stanton contentedly make a ridiculous analogy

[about] the high rate of accidents by riding scooters in Taiwan to lessen the [public's] worries about the possibility of falling ill by eating U.S. beef? ..."

B) "William Stanton and U.S. Beef"

Jaw Shao-kong, a radio program host, wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (10/30):

"... If [AIT Director] William Stanton's logic is correct, then we would like to ask, how many people in the United States die from car accidents per year? Does it mean that anything which causes a lower death rate than that of car accidents could be allowed to be imported into the United States? [Would the] United States Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration agree? ... Taiwan is not that anti-American and always treats the United States as a friend. But if the United States pushes the envelope too much, a political storm will be stirred up. ..."

C) "Taiwan People's Perspectives on China and the United States"

An editorial in the KMT-leaning, China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] (10/30) wrote:

"The arrogance and rudeness of AIT Director William Stanton as well as the United States' attitude of being [the imperial] Court and a superior country are not unfamiliar to Taiwan. It is just that for many people of Taiwan, this kind of unfriendly attitude and unequal relationship should have been shown by the mainland [China] government and officials. Now, by the incident of U.S. beef, the Taiwan people have a total different experience. ..."

"The key to how much this new experience brought about by the controversy over U.S. beef will affect Taiwan people's perspectives on the United States, whether it will be engraved in people's memory forever, or just like a boat leaves behind no trail in its path, will still depend on the attitude of the United States. On the other hand, Taiwan people's perspectives on China and on the United States are usually connected with one another. The stronger the likelihood that Mainland [China] realizes 'a harmonious society' and 'a harmonious world' in its internal and foreign policies, the more likely [it will be] that [Mainland China] will show enlightenment and tolerance. This would certainly be more attractive to Taiwan, which would be more able to balance Taiwan's one-sided leaning toward the United States. ..."

D) "The Bull Is Pushing Taiwan Away from the U.S."

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/30):

"In Taiwan, the expression one would apply when strongly protesting something outrageous is pronounced the same as 'cow.'" On the other hand, the mainland Chinese term 'niu (meaning cow),' the new buzz word in cross-Straits media, describes something/someone extraordinary as well as extraordinarily adamant.

"With his bizarre comparison between the number of scooter riders killed in Taiwan to mad cow disease statistics, the new U.S. envoy to Taiwan, William Stanton, earned himself the right to be called 'cow' in both Taiwanese and Chinese connotations. ..."

"Under such circumstances, the director of the American Institute in Taiwan's (AIT) comment, as well as the AIT's decision not to re-open negotiations, certainly did not help Ma's administration other than cementing the U.S.' image as the unthinking bully across the negotiation table. Despite the fact that beef represents only one percent of the bilateral trade between the U.S. and Taiwan, the American negotiators have made it a precondition for any trade negotiations. It is seen as a litmus test to whether a country is 'friendly' to the U.S. ..."

"Taiwan is not only a developed nation with 23 million people and the biggest contract chip-maker in the world, it is one of the most important pieces of the puzzle in U.S. foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific. The United States is obviously not seeing this side of the argument. By citing the number of 1,034 deaths in motorcycle accidents in Taiwan last year, Stanton did not simply make an

analogy. He also implied that mad cow disease does not concern Taiwan - not because U.S. beef products are safe, but because the island is not statistically significant enough to raise a mad cow worry.

"But the Taiwanese people are worrying. A local university student consumed cow dung Thursday in protest of the re-opening of U.S. beef imports. Washington should do something to reassure the Taiwanese people and show its concern to the island as a strategic partner before it is too late. For now, public anger is directed mainly at the Ma administration. Before long it will turn to the other party in the beef talks."

E) "Time for Some Facts about U.S. Beef"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/30):

"... One thing that politicians don't seem to be taking notice of, however, is the scientific evidence that suggests eating US beef poses no substantial health risk. ...

"In the US, to date there have been just three cases of BSE (one imported) and three deaths from vCJD, but two of these three deaths were likely cases of exposure in the UK, while the other was a recent immigrant. These figures are the kind of factual information the public should have been presented with before the ban was lifted. This would have given them the chance to make an informed choice on the matter, rather than be fed with misinformation, rumor and the mischief of politicians with ulterior motives.

"American Institute in Taiwan Director William Stanton's indelicate comparison that eating US beef is safer than riding a scooter only served to embolden opponents and allowed them to continue their campaign of baseless accusations. ..."

STANTON